

Diligent Dads

By Al Felder

⁶And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: ⁷And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. ⁸And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. ⁹And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” (Deut. 6:6-9)

Children are to be taught the word of God. This teaching is not to be half-hearted or neglected. Instead, the Bible states that it is to be done diligently. In other words, the teaching is to be done with care and persistence. Who better to fill this role than the father? Children need diligent dads to be the men God intends for them to be.

The greatest ill of our society is the lack of spiritual leadership by the father in the home. In homes where some training is taking place it is usually conducted by the mother without the help of the father. Fathers have neglected their biblical role as the head of the family and abandoned their responsibility.

What is even sadder is that most fathers don't seem to know how to be the head of the family. It is as if fathers of the past did not transmit this knowledge to the present generation, and as a result, fathers today know very little, if anything, about the family structure and their role. They have not been trained nor have they seen spiritual leadership modeled.

God, in His word, has left a pattern for teaching how we are to conduct ourselves within the family. In the epistle to Titus, the Apostle Paul by the inspiration of the Spirit gives instruction on how individuals are to conduct themselves. He speaks to the aged men and women and gives specific instructions to the aged women. *“That they may teach the young women.”* (Titus 2:4) The teaching that is done is by example and it pertains to the role the young women are to have in the home. When this pattern is neglected, a generation is raised without the proper knowledge of how to fill the role that God has given them.

Although the afore mentioned passage pertains to women, it gets across the principle of one generation modeling to the next how they should fulfill their God given role in the home. Other passages will be used later that pertain to men; but, the point is this, when the pattern is broken chaos ensues.

Because of the broken pattern men in general don't know why they should lead their families or how to do it. The Biblical concept of manhood has been lost and replaced with the

world's view. As a result, some men may feel almost sissy when it comes to spiritual things. Their image of masculinity is missing the spiritual component. They have not been given any tools or materials to be a diligent dad.

Why are we so concerned about the fathers? Well, let's look to the Bible to establish the role of the diligent dad. In the first epistle to Timothy, Paul discusses the roles of a man and a woman. *"For Adam was first formed, then Eve."* (1 Tim. 2:13) He points all the way back to the order of creation in order to establish the difference between the role of a man and the role of a woman. Since man was created first, he is given the responsibility of taking the lead in the family.

Let's consider this idea a little further. *"¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: ¹⁷But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."* (Gen. 2:16, 17) Notice if you will that this command was given to Adam prior to the creation of Eve. Furthermore, God did not repeat this command after Eve's creation. This lets us know that after creating Eve, God expected Adam to fulfill his role as the head of the family and teach Eve the commands of God.

Once God had created man and woman He gave the command to reproduce. *"And God blessed them, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."* (Gen. 1:28) The purpose of this was to spread God's glory over the face of the earth.

We find this same message given by the prophet Malachi. During his day the Jews had rejected God and were living in wickedness. The cause of this decay was the break-down of the family. *"¹⁴Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. ¹⁵And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth."* (Malachi 2:14, 15) God reminds His people of the pattern for the family. The husband and wife were to be one, and their offspring were to be godly.

God is a God of order. Without order there is only chaos, confusion, and disorganization. In His wisdom, God knows that order is necessary to accomplish a purpose. He shows us this order in His word. *"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."* (1 Cor. 11:3) In

the same passage God teaches that order exists within the Godhead as well as the home. This order exists so that God's purposes may be accomplished.

The importance of a diligent dad can be understood even further by looking at the qualifications of an elder. *"⁴One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; ⁵For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?"* (1 Tim. 3:4, 5) The most important office that exists within the church can only be filled by a man who leads his house in the ways of God.

The father is responsible for the direction of his family. *"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."* (Eph. 6:4) For some time, I would look at this verse and generalize it. Instead of just applying it to fathers, I would apply it to both parents in general. However, this particular passage of scripture is addressed to the fathers and the fathers alone.

The father is the authority figure within the home, as such; he is to be very careful in the way that he conducts himself. If a father is harsh and critical towards his children they will resent him. Also, if the father is absent the children will have no authority figure to look up to. The end result of either scenario will be that children will not have the proper respect for authority and ultimately the proper respect for God. The way that we as fathers conduct ourselves within our God given role has everything to do with how our children will respond to God's authority. This, I believe, is the ultimate point to this passage of scripture and a very strong reason why diligent dads are so desperately needed.

Mothers can instill a sense of value within their children, but it takes a father to validate it. All children need their father's blessing. Both boys and girls need to know if they are good enough in their father's eyes. They will read into their father's behavior by watching his mood's, body language, and tone of voice. They will do all of this in an attempt to answer the question: How does my dad feel about me? Make no mistake about it though, when dad's stamp of approval is not there, the child will look for validation somewhere else.

Consider the following statistics. The National Fatherhood Initiative states that there are 98 million men in America. Of that number, 63 million say they have no faith in Christ. Thirty three percent of all children live without the presence of their biological father. Thirty nine percent of male inmates had no father figure in their home. Fifty percent of all female inmates had no father figure in their home. We need diligent dads today. There is more that could be said about this point, but I believe this is sufficient evidence to prove our point. We need men to be diligent dads and fulfill the role that God has given them.

Well, we may have answered the question of why, but what about the how? How does a father become the spiritual leader of his home? We have already answered a part of this

question already, but I believe the following quote will help make the point even clearer. Voddie Baucham, Jr. writes: “It is fathers - not youth ministers, children’s ministers, or preschool ministers (none of which find warrant for their existence in the pages of Scripture) – who are charged with this duty of discipling the next generation.”¹ The point is that the responsibility is ours as fathers.

How many times have you grown tired and weary of watching people do everything to solve a problem or correct a situation? Everything that is, but the right thing. It will literally make you want to yell out and say, “Can’t you see what you are doing is not working!” We have the exact same situation when it comes to raising children. We have to make sure that we begin from the right starting point and not the wrong one. The right starting point is us as fathers.

As we consider the idea of how we can be the leaders of our family, we have to have a real good evaluation of ourselves. How do we as men define ourselves? I am You fill in the blank. The fact is that in our culture most men define themselves by their career. Everything is often determined by our career: where we live, our lifestyle, and the amount of time we spend with our families.

Let’s look at a biblical view of our careers. *“But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”* (1 Tim. 5:8) My career exists to serve my family and not the other way around. My family doesn’t exist to make me a better “whatever.” It serves the purpose of allowing me to provide for my family. It doesn’t, however, define me. The way that I fill my God given role defines me. My relationship with the members of my family defines me.

A second way in which we need to evaluate ourselves is through our use of time. ¹⁵*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, ¹⁶Redeming the time, because the days are evil.”* (Eph. 6:15, 16). The words of this passage often go unheeded. Every man needs to look at his use of time with eternity in view.

Think about the things you do on a daily and weekly basis. Categorize the time you spend at your job, on entertainment, recreation, leisure, with your family, and studying God’s word. We often spend less time on the last two areas even though they are the most important. If we are not purposeful with our time, our society will make it impossible for us to live meaningful lives. One day we’ll look up and our kids will be gone and we’ll say, “I wish I had made better use of my time.”

¹ Jr., Voddie Baucham. 2011. *Family Shepherds*. Wheaton, IL : Crossway, 2011. p. 13.

A third way that we need to evaluate ourselves is through our love for the church. *“I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.”* (Psalm 122:1). What are our true feelings about the body of Christ? Do we enjoy being around other Christians? Do we enjoy gathering with those of like precious faith and worshipping God?

Think of a salesman. His job is to get you excited about a product and make you want it. In order for him to do that he has to be excited about the product as well. The same principle is true when it comes to being the spiritual leader of your home. If you don't care and are unenthusiastic about the church and serving God, chances are that your family will feel the same way. As fathers we must have a love for the body of Christ and a passion and zeal for serving God. Such an attitude is contagious and will spread through our family.

After we evaluate ourselves, then what? Pray. Pray for your family and pray with your family. *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”* (James 5:16) The Bible teaches that God hears and answers the prayers of those who obey Him. Prayer, as the Bible states, is powerful. It is a time in which we communicate with God.

As fathers, how can our hearts not burn with a desire to bring God's word before our families as often as we can that we might convert our children? How do we keep the tears from flowing at even the thought that one of our precious children could be lost for all eternity? More importantly, how do we not tremble at the thought that our neglect could contribute to such a tragedy? These are the questions that should cause us to pray whenever and wherever possible. Pray that we would be the men that God would have us to be and lead them in the ways of righteousness.

We must also study the Bible. We need to study the Bible for ourselves and study the Bible with our families. *“As newborn babes, desire he sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”* (1 Peter 2:2) We need to have a desire for the word of God. When we read the Bible, we are reading the very mind of the creator of the universe. It is the ultimate source of wisdom.

Depending on our level of understanding, we may have to start out simple. Read a passage and discuss it with your family, study a chapter or pick a topic and study what the Bible has to say about it. As our knowledge grows so will our ability to study with our family. Don't allow yourself to get overwhelmed and worry about what to study. Start with what you know and let your studies grow as you do.

You can have the family study together once a week if you want. Each person can examine some scriptures and you all can discuss them. Give your kids some verses to

memorize and quiz them. Talk about the Bible while doing chores, riding in the car, playing games, or any other activity. Make the Bible a part of your life.

Finally, just do it. Are you going to have all the answers? No. Nobody does. Are you going to make mistakes? Yes. So is every other father. However if you do not try, you will not succeed. The best way to fail as a father is to do nothing. That's guaranteed to work every time.

Maybe you haven't been the spiritual leader of your home and you tell yourself it's too late to start now. Maybe you didn't have a proper model from your father or anyone else for that matter. Well, there's a passage for that as well. *"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."* (2 Tim. 2:2) Seek out another man whom you know and respect and ask him to teach you so that you may be able to teach your family.

We all have our excuses as to why we can't, but those excuses stop here. God's says it's our job no matter what. Regardless of the past, the future is our responsibility. Are you ready to be a diligent dad?